



Domestic Violence and Vulnerability: Uncared Voices of Women at Tikiapara Slum, Howrah, West Bengal

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Abstract: Since the dawn of civilization, the two dichotomous groups of 'have' and 'have not' are playing on the basis of power matrix. Being the 'second sex' women are subjected to several injustice in multiple contexts of life and that indicates their non-homogeneous nature. Violence against women is not a new happening. Particularly domestic violence is the most serious concern of society as it questions the functioning of basic institutions like family that is supposed to offer care and support to its members. However, many a time woman in place of having care from their nearest one become the victim of cruelty that hurt them mentally as well as physically to a great extent. Domestic violence is not only a legal matter but also a social and cultural issue depending on situation. The present study has been conducted on 50 women from Tikiapara slum in Howrah district of West Bengal with the objective to explore the experience of women regarding the unfair treatment they face within family and their struggle to live with that injustice. Being a descriptive one with a qualitative approach the study shows that vulnerabilities of women are systematically created by the existing socio-economic and cultural processes. The paper highlights the requirement of adequate support for these women through the specific policies and community efforts.

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Introduction

In her masterpiece, *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir writes about the notion of women as the other in the patriarchal world stating that historically women have been defined against men. According to De Beauvoir, the difference between being born a woman and a man is that a woman is shaped by the societal rules and expectations that exist in the culture where she lives. This shows that gender roles are created by society, not by nature. So, femininity isn't something a person is born with rather it's something they learn while growing up in a particular culture. Women are usually placed on a lower status where they are characterized by their relationships with men and this practice disempower them. This structural inequity leads to the whole system of oppression where women are socialized to accept their inferior role (De Beauvoir, 1973).

Gender based violence is the reality of almost every society and is largely unreported and uncared. As the occurrence of violence is not limited to either in home or in wider community it is very difficult to determine a safe place for women. At every stage of life women are exposed to violence that include female foeticides and infanticide, child prostitution, rape, partner violence, dowry death, emotional abuse, sexual harassment at workplace and many more. UN general assembly define gender violence as,

"any act of gender-based violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women including threat of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Chauhan, 2003).

With its diverse nature and magnitude gender-based violence include a number of cruelties against women. Domestic violence against women is a very common among them and it has been a reality of women life from time immemorial. Even we find the instance of domestic violence in our epic the *Mahabharata*. Violence within the walls of home is a routine affair in many families and in many forms. Women and girls have been languishing behind the curtain within the periphery of their households that is supposed to provide them security and peace. Women are kicked, dragged, beaten, pulled by hair and hurt by the abusive language every day. For a long period of time domestic violence has been deferred by the state considering it as a private matter. However, finally the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) enacted in 2005 in India (Philipose, 2010).

In India this act is the first significant effort that considers domestic abuse as a punishable offense. "Section 3 of the law says any act/conduct/omission/commission that harms or injures or has the potential to harm or injure will be consider 'domestic violence'. Under this, the law considers physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse or threats of the same. Even a single act of commission or omission may constitute domestic violence --- in other words, women do not have to suffer a prolonged period of abuse before taking recourse to the law." A woman has the right to the services of the police, shelter homes and medical establishment once become the victim of domestic violence (Yojana, 2012).

However, a law on paper can hardly change the mindset of people they have been carrying for years. Still, it is a beginning, a recognition of right (Thomas, 2011). In patriarchal society women are socialized since their childhood to tolerate violence following traditional norms. Sometimes such kind of violence is also rationalized (Chauhan. 2003). The effects of violence are grave for women. Their health--mental, physical and psychological, is considerably damaged. Physical wound can heal but emotional injury last forever. Dr. Surinder Jaswal (2002) has revealed how women's health is affected by violence. Chronic illness like tuberculosis and gynecological morbidity are reported a higher level of domestic violence (Nagda, 2003).

Slums may be defined as the substandard residential areas marked by over population, lack of drinking water, absence of proper sanitation, scarcity of space and many other basic facilities required for maintaining a minimum standard of life. Slum and slum like settlements is a common feature of cities across India. Even in suburban areas this kind of settlement is increasing. 17.4% of the total urban population is slum population of India and 65.49 million people in this country are living in slums (Chatterjee & Ganguly, 2022). Being in a marginal position slum itself bears a stigma with it. There are many dark sides of life in slum. Domestic violence is one of them and it is a common factor in Indian slums as various studies have shown the fact. However domestic violence is not restricted to slum areas only. Even in high society it can be observed. May be the form and manifestation is different.

The Present Study

The present study is conducted in Tikiapara slum, Ward No 20 in Howrah, West Bengal in the year 2025. The slum is situated beside Tikiapara railway track. The settlement pattern goes in a line in parallel with the railway track. It is a medium size slum. Majority of the population is migrated from U.P & Bihar and they speak in Hindi. In terms of religion mainly two communities--- Hindu and Muslim live here side by side. For Census of India-2011, slums have been categorized into three types: a) Notified Slums, b) Recognized Slums, and c) Identified Slums (Chandramoiuli, 2013). Tikiapara Ward No 20 is under Howrah Municipal Corporation (HMC) and it may be categorised as 'Recognized' slum. "Slums in the Indian Census, have been defined as residential areas which are unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, lack of ventilation, electricity of sanitation facilities" (Sabri & Campbell, 2015). Tikiapara also bears with these characteristics. In such a degradable living condition women specially attracts the attention of the researcher. The inhuman condition of their living is really shocking. The research is done with the following objectives.

- To find out the background of women in Tikiapara slum;
- To explore their experiences of violence;
- To highlight their coping mechanisms to live within these unfavourable situations.

Methodology

To fulfil the objectives of the study the research has followed certain procedures that can help the researcher to reach at desired direction. The study mainly makes use of primary data which is collected from the Ward No 20 of Tikiapara slum of. But secondary sources like other papers, books newspaper reports have also been consulted.

- **Study Participants**

A qualitative approach is used to understand the experiences of domestic violence of 50 women residing in the slum. 25 of the Women are Hindus and the rest 25 belong to Muslim community. All of them have marital experience though some are now widow and separated. All of them have children. The socio-economic characteristics of the women are presented in Table No: 1 and Table No: 2.

- **Data Collection and Analysis**

Purposive sampling is used to identify the participants who have the experience of marriage. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a semi- structured interview schedule with each participant in their respective living space during the period of **July to September 2025**. The questions were mostly open-ended to provide the participants adequate scope to narrate their experiences. The purpose of the research is explained to the respondents and their consent is taken before interview. They are assured about the confidentiality of their responses. Thematic analysis of the accounts, provided by the respondents, is used in the study. The interview responses were originally in Bengali and it was translated into English manually. Some cases are explained in details to offer the thick description of violence faced by women.

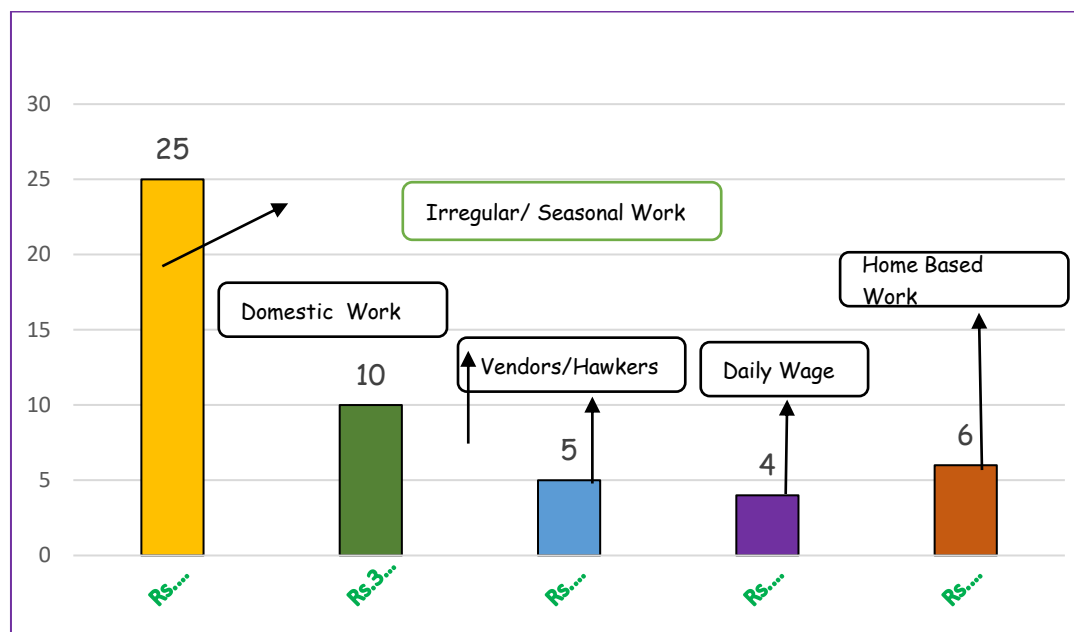
Background of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n=50)

Characteristics	Frequency		Total	Percentage
	Hindu	Muslim		
Age Group				
18--25	8	7	15	30%
26--33	10	10	20	40%
34--41	5	5	10	20%
42--49	2	3	05	10%
Total	25	25	50	100%
Education				
Illiterate	3	6	9	18%
No formal education	4	2	6	12%
Primary Education	13	15	28	56%
Passed M.P	3	2	05	10%
Passed H.S.	2	0	02	4%
Total	25	25	50	100%
Type of Economic Activity				
Domestic Work	6	4	10	20%
Street Vendors/ Hawkers	3	2	5	10%
Daily Wage	3	1	4	8%
Home based work	3	3	6	12%
Irregular/ seasonal work	10	15	25	50%
Total	25	25	50	100%

Source: Data Collected from Field

All the women included in this study are adults. The age range of the respondents is from 18 to 49. Maximum number of women belong to the age group from 18 to 33 and it is 70%. The observable fact is that domestic violence is the reality of teenagers along with women above 40. Menace of illiteracy continues to be a fact even in 2020s. The scope of basic education is not still available among women even after so many attempts.



Graph No 1: Income of Respondents From Different Types of Economic Activities (n=50)

Source: Data Collected from Field

However, using the scope and capacity of their own, all the respondents are engaged with some kinds of work that brings them some earning. 50% respondents have no regular work and their earning is meagre and it is within Rs. 3000/-. Among the remaining 50%, some respondents who have regular working opportunity (like daily labours, home-based workers etc) are in a little better position (in terms of income). The educational level and the economic activity of workers along with their income indicates a marginal social status of the respondents.

Table 2: Marriage and Family of Respondents (n=50)

Characteristics	Frequency		Total	Percentage
	Hindu	Muslim		
Age of Marriage				
13 to below 18	14	16	30	60%
18 to below 23	11	09	20	40%
23 to below 27	0	0	0	0
Total	25	25	50	100%
Present Marital Status				
Married	12	18	30	60%
Separated /Divorced	6	4	10	20%
Widow	7	3	10	20%
Total	25	25	50	100%
Age of 1 st Pregnancy				
15 to below 18	12	14	26	52%
18 to below 21	13	11	24	48%
21 to below 24	0	0	0	0
Total	25	25	50	100%

Source: Data Collected from Field

60 % women have entered in a marital relationship before attaining the age of 18 and 52 % have experienced motherhood below 18. All the respondents get married within the age of 23 and all of them conceive within the age of 21 years. So, the scope of empowerment or the scope to live a life of own is something they can ever imagine of.

Women & Experience of Violence

In a patriarchal society like India women and girls are taught to be quiet about their exposure to violence. The ongoing system teaches them to accept, endure and even rationalize the torture happening to them. "Nearly 95% women continue to stay in a violent marriage because they do not have the social and economic empowerment needed for individual existence. The process of socialization of girls and women stresses upon humility and adjustment as virtues and rebelliousness is seen as a major vice. This makes women submissive and accepting of their fate even if this includes abusive family" (Raju and Venkateswarlu, 2003).

In the present study the background of violence can be traced through women's vulnerabilities that include pre-mature marriage, deficiency of economic freedom, lack of voice in family and absence of control over their own bodies. In patriarchal ideology women even do not have control over their bodies that are perceived as the property of their husbands or someone else who is supposed to be the owner of women. In many cases, it is found that women are treated like a toy in sexual encounters. The powerless position of women creates a vicious circle. The more they become powerless the more they become vulnerable and the more they become vulnerable the more they become powerless. It has an adverse impact on their self-image and self-respect.

Table 3: Source of Violence within Family (n=50)

Source of Violence	Respondents		Total	Percentage (%)
	Hindu	Muslim		
Husband	15	16	31	62%
In-laws	9	8	17	34%
Others	1	1	2	4%
Total	25	25	50	100

Source: Data Collected from Field

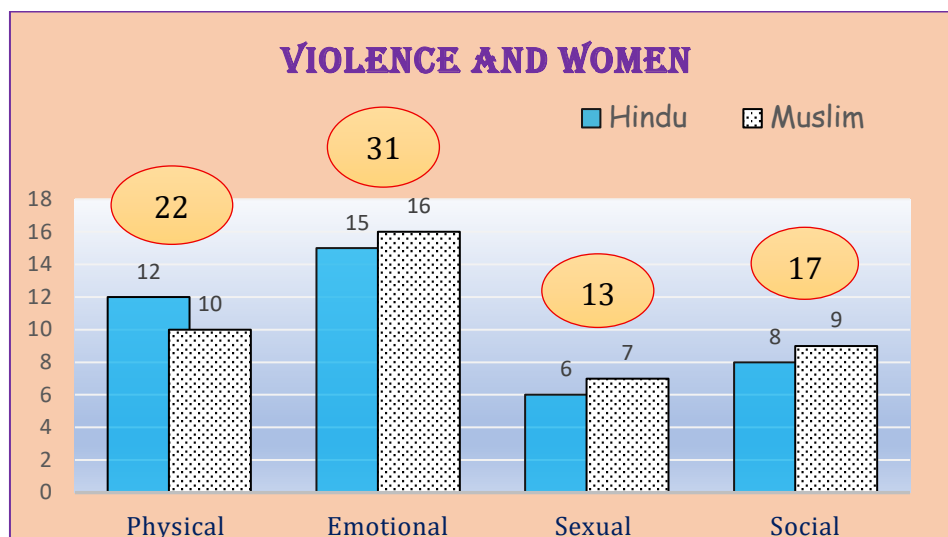
Reports of different organizations like WHO, NCRB explores that maximum women experience sexual/ physical violence from their partners (Chatterjee & Ganguly, 2022). Occurrence of intimate partner violence is common in all settings. However, in case of slum the issue is more precarious. Characterised by marginal socio-economic position, slum environment hardly enables women to move out from abusive relationship and thus makes women more vulnerable (Sabri & Campbell, 2015). Tikiapara quite clearly shows these issues. 62 % women faces violence from their husbands. If husbands are the major source of violence, then it is quite natural that in-laws are fully authorised to exhibit ferocity towards their daughter/sister in laws who are quite helpless being surrounded by the members of husband's family. The causes of violence include patriarchal authority, gender inequity, unemployment, financial stress, alcohol addiction and many more. Violence takes different forms and it affects women in a serious way. The practice of violence and their impacts are revealed from the Table No: 4.

Table 4: Manifestation of Violence and Impact on Women

Type of Violence	Description	Impact on Women
Physical	Hitting, slapping, kicking, or using objects to cause bodily harm.	Causes injuries, chronic pain, creates fear, reduces mobility, and affects daily life.
Emotional	Insult, humiliation, threats, using slang language, constant criticism, intimidation, controlling behaviour.	Lower self-esteem, induces anxiety, depression and a feeling of helplessness.
Sexual	Forced sex intercourse, violent/rough sex	Lead to trauma, unwanted pregnancies, and a feeling of powerlessness.
Social	Restriction regarding meeting with relatives, attending community gatherings, talking to others. Avoidance/ boycott from neighbours after divorce /separation.	Reduce social support, create isolation, lessen the feeling of community belongingness and increase vulnerability to other forms of abuse.

Source: Data Collected from Field

It is important to mention here that the categorization of violence does not mean a single respondent is facing a particular type of harassment. This typology is not in water tight compartment. Rather majority of women are living with multiple types of violence. Sometimes they have to endure all the four types of brutality (physical, emotional, sexual, social) at a time.



Graph No:2: Types of Violence Faced by the Respondents

Source: Data Collected from Field

Occurrence of emotional violence is maximum followed by physical abuse as is evident from Graph No:2. As because a single respondent is not confined to a particular category of violence, the total frequency of the Graph No:2 is more than total number of respondents (50).

Now a day's religion has become a very important component of identity. The world including India is getting divided into so many groups based on religious belief. Most interestingly the study explores that there is no difference between Hindu and Muslim women who have suffering domestic violence. The different religious ideology can't make any difference in the vulnerability, powerlessness and a helpless life of their women. To make clear the situation, 3 cases of women are explained in detail. They belong to the 3 categories of marital status----married, separated and widow.

Case No 1: Narrative of a Married Woman

Soma (name changed), a married woman of 29 years is living in Tikiapara slum with her husband Kalu, two children and her mother-in-law. Kalu works as a labour in a rubber factory. It is a low-income family. Education of Soma is limited up to primary level. Poverty, familial responsibility and child marriage hamper her school education.

Before marriage she was a resident of Canning, a place in South 24 Parganas district of the state. There she lived also in a slum like area. She got married at the age of 16 and became mother only after one year of marriage at the age of 17. After the birth of her first girl child, she was forced to conceive for second time within 1 and ½ years. Immature motherhood thrust upon physical and mental burden on her.

Married life of Soma is endowed with tensions, economic instability and powerless existence. Dependence on husband on each and every matter makes her position feeble within family. To meet up the financial crisis of family Soma works as a maid in some houses and her income is within Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000/- per month. But she has no control upon her earning. She has to handover the total money to Kalu who decides how to spend it. Soma hardly gets any scope of savings that she can spend on her children's education or in any emergency situation. No future planning is possible in this situation. Along with economic deprivation, violence is the everyday reality for Soma. Beating is frequent as and when there is conflict over money and responsibility. Soma also faces insultation, baseless complain and abusive language that creates a mental pain for her. Sexual violence is also there but she is silent about it. Her consent is hardly cared by her husband. Even she is not allowed to express her opinion regarding family planning and using birth control measures. She is the victim of forced sex many a time. Kalu is alcoholic and because of his doubtfulness he does not permit his wife to visit to her natal family in Canning. Kalu even does not like the working of Soma as a maid. She cannot keep any mobile with her and is always under surveillance whenever she is outside home. However, against all oddities Soma is continuing her earning.

Case No 2: Narrative of a Widow Woman

Nilofar (name changed) is a widow of 38 years. She is the mother of three children. She has been engaged with some irregular home-based work like tailoring but her earning is very low (within Rs. 2000/-) to meet up the basic needs. Moreover, she gets no allowance offered by government like '*Lakhir Bhandar*', widow allowance etc. With this meagre and insufficient income, she has to depend on other family members and sometimes she also borrows money from neighbours finding no other option.

Since her childhood she remained busy with household chores and was deprived of any opportunity to have formal education. Nilofar got married at the age of 15 and became pregnant within 1 year of marriage. After marriage she came to *Tikiapara* slum. However, she spent her childhood also in a slum like settlement in *Satragachi*, a place near Howrah. After marriage she was rigorously tortured by her husband, Anowar who was a fruit seller. Anowar was an alcoholic person. The body of Nilofar was perceived as the property of Anowar. She had to tolerate the brutal sexual conduct of her husband. Every screaming of Nilofar and her begging for relief gave the man a kind of pleasure. Along with sexual torture physical violence was also a regular happening. At the age of 33 Nilofar got relief from that man after his death owing to some lengthy illness.

But that widowhood does not give Nilofar a better life. Though she gets relief from sexual abuse but she does not get any mental comfort. She has lost economic security, social status and the minimum mental support completely. Her in-laws become the new source of her mental agony. Use of abusive language is a regular event. She is blamed for the death of her husband. She has to live with negligence, insult and some kind of social isolation. She is not allowed to take part in any social event of her community. She has no voice in any decision taken by her family. Her social position is marginalized remarkably. Social violence against widows is still a reality of many communities. She has none to stand by her. The appearance of Nilofar bears the evidence of prolonged torture happening to her. However, she expresses her feeling of relief from unbearable sexual wound every day. She is very weak and tired but hardly can avail any health care service. She wishes to educate her children and wants to save her daughters from the ill practice of child marriage. Lack of capital and social support cannot fulfil the dream of Nilofar to become economically independent.

Case No 3: Narrative of a Divorced Woman

Lali (name changed) is a 32 years old divorced lady. She has been living in *Tikiapara* slum since her childhood. She works as a housemaid and also remains engaged with some homebased work. Her income is approximately Rs. 5000/- per month. She lives with her two children in a 'jhopri' room of the slum beside her brothers' families. Her income is not sufficient for meeting up all the necessities of daily life like healthy food, health care facilities and education of her children. Moreover, she gets no alimony from her husband. Occasionally she gets support from her brothers.

Lali got married at the age of 15 with Shambhu who was a vendor and lived in the same slum of *Tikiapara*. Because of familial pressure Lali could not continue her education after primary level and became the victim of child marriage at the age of 15. She delivers her first child before attaining adulthood. In her married life she faced verbal abuse and mental torture regularly. Physical violence was the reality of everyday. Shambhu had extramarital affairs. He used to spend his whole income on alcohol and on other women. In maximum times the children are left hungry. Shambhu was not at all interested to take any responsibility of Lali or her children. After spending 10 years amidst this inhuman living condition she got divorced as there was no more possibility of adjustment. Her natal family helped her to get divorce.

After separation she faces social violence. Neighbours doubt about her profession and character. From their attitude Lali feels that these people would become happy if they see Lali as a beggar after divorce. She has to bear the abusive language from neighbours and also from her own family. To avoid gossip and to escape social surveillance she can't talk to any one freely. Lali is caught up in a trap. Living with husband offers her only suffering and after leaving him she becomes the victim of stigma associated with a single woman. In place of providing support our society begins to malign her. Now it is a challenge for Lali to educate her children and make them established in life amidst extreme economic and social insecurity. Along with Lali the reasons of divorce/separation (for 20% respondents: Table No:2) include extreme brutality beyond tolerance, alcoholic husband, extramarital affair of husband and financial crisis.

The condition of these women reflects the structural weakness of social and economic institutions. The ideology of early marriage of girls as soon as possible is still dominant. The misfortune of women is not only caused by in laws and husbands but also caused by natal families that play a big role to shape the

future of their girls. The main constraint of empowerment begins from here only. As the daughters have to leave their natal family and go to other family after marriage, they are perceived as temporary members within their family of orientation in our context within patriarchy. Accordingly, they are denied of rights because of this temporary membership within the natal family (Priyam, Menon & Banerjee, 2011).

Secondly marriage indicates a change in the status of daughters. After marriage they are advised to adjust by their mothers who have also realized or faced the same situations in their lives. It is accepted that violence is a common issue and women are required to manage it rather than complaining. According NFHS-3 more women than men (54% and 51% respectively) believe it is okay for a husband to beat his wife if she is found guilty (Philipose, 2010). In some cases, also the mothers of the respondents console them by saying that-----

"If you are beaten by your husband then you are someone important in his life. Beating indicates that he has considered you as his wife. If you face no fighting from his side then it is sure that you can't make any place in his life".

Facing violence within family is an age-old issue. Even some well-off families practise it in name of tradition, in name of having a male baby or in name of superiority of men. Reports, reality shows and many sources have revealed the fact. Naturally in a shanty place like slum this kind of situation is not a very surprising one. But what is disheartening is the lack of social care and support in every layer of society.

Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents to Deal with Violence

The present world can be termed as the world of intolerance and violence as we observe the brutality of human being in every corner of living. But it is the natural instinct that motivates individual to struggle to survive. "Survival for the fittest" is the ultimate reality. So is the case of women at Tikiapara. Violence is a part of their everyday life and they are trying to cope up with the unfavourable situation with their limited attempts that are quite ineffective.

Seeking help from family members, Self Help Groups, local authority are common but is of no use. In maximum cases women approach their natal family and relatives. But at large what they gain are some words of consolation and temporary economic help. Moreover, many a time this kind of assistance is conditional and limited because of poverty. Sometimes women remain silent in fear of stigma, familial prestige and further torture. To reinforce the patriarchal structure of families the issues of women are getting neglected making them more vulnerable. The dependence of some women on self-help groups indicates that women seek a collective solution of the injustice happening to them instead of escaping the situation. They request repeatedly the SHGs for taking some initiatives but the neat result is zero. Their attempt to have relief from horrible experiences is uncared always.

Legal advice is hardly taken by the respondents because whenever they approach the local authority with their problem, they are disregarded. Moreover, sometimes they also have to tolerate abusive language like ***"To gain something it is required to give something"***. Actually, the way to have justice is not clear to them. Finding no other alternative, they follow religious paths to have some kind of mental peace. They begin to depend on God and console themselves by thinking ***"Everything will be fine in some day"***. Depending on unknown power only reflects the fault of system and reminds the famous word of Karl Marx, "Religion is the opium of people".

Resource is always limited. Particularly in areas like slum, it is much more below than what is required for a healthy living. And women are always expected to sacrifice their rights, their share, their voice for the sake of adjustment and for being so called 'good' women. "The struggle for existence makes the provision of basic rights a matter of 'luxury'. When the basic necessities of life are not assured how it is possible to assure dignity, security and protection to women" (Leelavathy and Priya, 2003).

Discussion and Conclusion

Desire to have a decent standard of living is something that everyone aspires to achieve. Moreover, in this age of internet and connectivity the glimpse of luxury life of people is exposed to everyone. Naturally the craving to have a healthy life haunts these women who are far away from having the minimal necessities of life. The women are living with a number of aspirations. They believe that their educational marginality makes them face this kind of circumstances. They wish to be more educated. They expect to have some training from government (in some skill-based work) to become stronger in financial matter. They always wish to get relief from present situation and to have a life in their own way beyond the domination and torture of family. Not a single respondent in this study is found fully unemployed. All of

them are involved with some kind of economic activity that brings some earning to them. But it is not complete economic empowerment. They express their desire to be more independent. They feel that their jobs are not respectful in society. Upbringing of children in a better way demands a healthy environment that is not in place at present. They are living with the hope to have a regular income, right to take decision, some autonomy, quality education for their children and overall, the dignity of being a human.

To focus on the lives of these women is like to open a Pandora's box filled up with unresolved complications that is hardly taken care of. They are the victims of poverty, improper diet since childhood, early marriage, educational limitation, lack of employment and meagre income, health issues (both mental and physical) and absence of proper health facility, limited/ no family support, scarcity of living space, improper sanitation, no privacy, restricted movement and finally different kinds of abuse and violence rampantly. The situation of these women reminds the view of Kamala Bhasin (1986) regarding manifestation of patriarchy in particular to South -Asian context. Preference of a male child to female child, deprivation of girls from equal share of food, pressure of household work on women, lack of educational openings for girls along with their limited mobility, beating of wife, denial of inheritance rights of women and moreover no control over their own bodies -----are the different aspects of patriarchy as Bhasin has pointed out.

Now the question is "who are these women?". Do they have the status of Indian citizen? Do they exercise their voting power to select the government? The answer is "Yes". All of these people hold voter cards and they are the citizens of India (at the time of data collection). So, it is also the responsibility of the government to look after them. As because they are in a marginal position, they need some special attention. During the researcher's visit in the place, it is noticed that not a single NGO is working there for addressing domestic violence related issues. The way of life is going on in a lackadaisical way disregarding the existing law of the land. Some legal interventions are really required to make it clear that domestic violence is a crime. Initiatives are needed to organize a few awareness camps to conscious people of their engagement with activities that are punishable under law. Ignorance regarding the notion of legality is pervasive among both men and women. Legal intervention and some instances of punishment may decrease the intensity and frequency of abuses. Counselling is necessary for the parents of girl child and significant others associated with a woman.

A social problem is considered as a situation that is not desired by the majority of society. Child marriage, pre-mature pregnancy, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, violence against women and many more issues are identified as social problems. The interesting fact is that a single social problem is not an end in itself. It creates a chain reaction. This study is a good example of that. Respondents are caught up in a vicious circle of deprivation beginning from their early childhood or better to say from their first breath in this human society. Even after having legal protections (like Right to Education Act, 2009; The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 etc) the vulnerable section of women continues to be the prey of many injustices.

The constitution of India along with charters of international bodies have granted inalienable rights to women in each and every stage of their life – right to life, liberty and access to opportunities without fear or favour. The duty of nation is to assure every citizen a chance to enjoy every human right. This fundamental philosophy must be followed while framing policies and planning (Leelavathy and Priya, 2003). Improving slum infrastructure along with addressing inequalities and discrimination is needed immediately. Some initiatives from government are necessary so that these vulnerable women can avail the govt provided allowances (like *Laxshmir Bhandar/Annapurna Bhandar* / Widow allowances/ old age allowances) as per law.

"Women are not weak but oppressed and powerless. They are not incapable but unrecognized. They are helpless due to denial of opportunity. Traditional stereotypes label them as *Dependents*" (Raju & Venkateswarwarlu, 2003). Vanishree & Bhuvaneshwari (2025) in their paper rightly pointed out "... it is critical for women to even breathe in their life due to brutality". The situation of women in Tikiapara slum encourages the de-empowerment of women in place of women empowerment. Power is the ability to influence people, to make them obey and to have a life of one's own choice. Power ensures to take decision and to materialize those decisions whereas powerlessness means the absence of these privileges. Without having power, it is every difficult for women to become empowered. To be an inclusive society based on justice and equity women empowerment is vital. It is not only about women's individuality and their freedom but also about human rights and social justice (Sultana, 2022).

"Crime against women is a gross violation of their Human Rights" (Chauhan, 2003) that are achieved by virtue of being a human. It is the dignity of every human life. These women are the subject of human rights violations (in the form of domestic violence) as they are considered more as an object rather than being a subject. Women empowerment is needed not only to protect themselves but also to secure the future of their children. Otherwise, the same degradable life will continue generation after generation.

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